The Dominican Republic Position Paper – Olivia Seamone

Country: The Dominican Republic

Committee: United Nations General Assembly: Special Session on Indigenous Affairs

The Dominican Republic is a nation located in the central Caribbean, covering two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola. The nation is home to an estimated 10.4 million people. The population of the Dominican Republic is currently represented by President Danilo Medina Sanchez. The Dominican Republic’s experience and history with the mistreatment of indigenous peoples has engrained an understanding of pain and suffering in the Dominican people. Very few indigenous groups remain in modern day Dominican Republic. In the 1490’s and early 1500s, during the arrival of the first European explorers, the native groups to the island of Hispaniola were greatly affected by their presence. Although the natives were welcoming and curious, the explorers took advantage of the natives’ kindness and, in turn, impacted the course of history. Before the European exploration, three million of the Taino people inhabited Hispaniola (modern day Dominican Republic and Haiti). Very few Indigenous people remained fifty years later. The primary cause of this was disease. By 1519, a third of the aboriginal population had died due to smallpox alone. The indigenous people that did survive were greatly influenced by the European culture. Specifically, Spaniards forcefully converted the indigenous people to Christianity.

The loss of the Taino people has, over time, contributed also to the loss of Taino culture and language. These changes have caused the Dominican society to partially assimilate into modern, developed culture. Although these changes have reaped some positive benefits, it has also created a lack of identity for the Dominican people. Dominicans typically have a mix of European (primarily Spanish) and African heritage. Very few actually have Taino ancestry.

Although the nation has few indigenous groups or peoples remaining, the Dominican Republic is eager to cooperate with other nations to give these marginalized and oppressed groups more rights and recognition. The nation’s population as a whole could also benefit by doing so because it would encourage the population to further explore and preserve their ancestral culture that is quickly diminishing. Typically, less medical care is available to those living in secluded areas with little contact with larger communities such as the few Taino remaining in the Dominican Republic. Pressing topics such as tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and mental health are issues that the Dominican Republic would eagerly like to address and find a suitable and reasonable resolution for. In the past two decades, the tuberculosis rate in the Dominican Republic has dramatically decreased by over 50% in part by the invention and accessibility to more advanced medicines. The Dominican Republic faces one of the highest rates of tuberculosis in the Americas. In 1990, 147 people for every 100,000 Dominicans were diagnosed with tuberculosis. As of 2014, only every 60 of 100,000 Dominicans have the disease. Funding to combat and resolve tuberculosis in the Dominican Republic is secured for the next three to five years; however, to ensure a guarantee of success, further and more long term funding is vital. The Dominican Republic would like the UN to impose more funding and relief to go towards the battle against tuberculosis in the nation and for the relief to be readily accessible to indigenous people’s. These indigenous peoples are the few who remain who are able to sustain their culture. If they are not treated properly and equally, they could be affected greatly by tuberculosis as well as several other medical issues. Treating these groups immediately is vital because they are the ones who are maintaining and practicing the culture of the previously abundant Tainos. This group represents a great amount of the Dominican Republic’s history and it’s practices must be maintained.

The Dominican Republic’s central viewpoint is to improve the lives and living conditions of all indigenous peoples while keeping economical reasons in mind. The Dominican Republic seeks to further these goals by cooperating with like minded nations to come to a reasonable resolution that satisfies the Dominican interest.

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